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DER SATZ VOM GRUNDE ALS PRINZIP DES SCHLIESSENS. By Dr. *Franz Erhardt*.
Halle a. S.: C. E. M. Pfeffer. 1891.

This little pamphlet of fifty-six pages, written and published to acquire for the author the *venia legendi* at the philosophical faculty of the University of Jena, treats the several figures of the syllogism from the standpoint that the middle term of the premisses is, logically considered, the consequence (*Folge*) of the subject and the reason (*Grund*) of the predicate in the conclusion. A few remarks are added on induction and analogy, without, however, entering into the problem as to the rôle which the method of induction plays in the evolution of the method of deduction.

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AGNOSTICISME. Essai sur quelques Théories pessimistes de la Connaissance. By *E. de Roberty*. Paris: Félix Alcan.

By the publication of this little book M. de Roberty redeems a promise made in his larger work, on the philosophy of the present century, already reviewed in *The Monist* (January, 1892). The pessimist theories of knowledge of which he treats are the three systems, those of Criticism, Positivism, and Evolutionism, to which he reduces contemporaneous philosophy. As these systems are regarded as parallel manifestations of a common stock of beliefs and general hypotheses, they must equally adopt the doctrine of Agnosticism. It is the aim of the present work to point out the several forms assumed by this doctrine and to show its falsity by an examination of the principles on which it is based. The author properly insists on the importance of distinguishing between the affirmation of the unknown and that of the unknowable. The recognition of the former is essential to all progress in knowledge, but the latter is "the direct negation of all possibility whatever of utilising the deficiencies of knowledge," and leads infallibly to the worship of ignorance. The best definition of the mental phenomenon of agnosticism, says M. de Roberty is the *pessimism* of the theory of knowledge, and it is not for nothing therefore that Kant preceded Schopenhauer in the development of idealism.

Modern agnosticism is based on the old notion of the separation of the phenomenon from the noumenon, and it was Kant who cleared it from its early theological and metaphysical conceptions. He affirmed the reality of the "thing in itself" as a fundamental postulate, and then declared that we can know nothing of things considered in themselves. Among the conceptions formed by the human mind through the exercise of its imaginative faculty are three which exhaust the entire content of the Unknowable. Thus it may be reduced to the idea of a reality other than that of which we are sensible; to the idea of a subject which perceives in a different manner from the real subject; and finally to the idea that our cerebral organisation reveals the world to us under delusive colors, all of which M. de Roberty declares to be simple fiction. His own ideas on the subject will appear later on.

Positivism stands towards materialism in the same relation as criticism stands towards idealism, whose noumenon becomes the unknowable thing in itself; as the simple matter of materialism becomes the unknown existence about which positivism says we can neither affirm nor deny anything. Modern agnosticism may be regarded thus as representing the long sought synthesis of the purest materialism and the most transcendent spiritualism, and it offers a striking demonstration of the fundamental equivalence of the hypotheses hitherto formulated as to the origin and essence of things. It proves also, says M. de Roberty, that the great law of the identity of contraries is applicable directly to all our very general conceptions. Contradictory as they seem to be, universal postulates must, by virtue of that law, be fundamentally identical. This introduces a discussion of the antinomies, developed but not invented by modern criticism, which found in them ample justification for its conclusion of the reality of the unknowable.

The double antinomy of time and space is regarded by the author as always presenting itself under the aspect of a long chain of contradictions which are manifestly merely verbal. The opposition between finite and infinite may be resolved into the distinction between concrete and abstract, between particular and general, if infinity is taken as synonymous with, or the perfect substitute for, general and abstract quantity, the universal attribute of things isolated from the things themselves. As to the problems connected with the ideas of a vacuum, matter, force and motion, M. de Roberty supposes them to have a purely psychological solution. Such ideas go beyond the "conceptive" capacity of mechanics and belong to psychology considered, not as a branch of philosophy, or as philosophy itself, but as a science of abstract concepts.

The philosophy of evolution, although monistic in the sense that it recognises the law of the identity of opposites, shows itself not to be so in reality by its doctrine of the unknowable. In this monism and agnosticism contradict each other, as it is contrary to reason "to affirm at the same time the identity of every phenomenon and their unknowability. The first marks the supreme term of the second. Identity in general serves to define knowableness. So that, if we remain on the elevated summits of pure abstraction too long, we run the danger anticipated by the law of identity of contraries. We fall directly into the error of taking the apparent negation of identity or of pure knowledge, the unknowable, for something really distinct, really separated from the knowable." This is the illusion of Spencer and of all the philosophers who have undertaken the difficult task of applying monism as a corrective of agnosticism.

M. de Roberty concludes the present work with a discussion of the relation between idea and reality, the thought and the object thought of, in which he gives us his opinion on that disputed point. He says that what philosophy calls "the object" is composed essentially of external nature, in which is included our own organism. Very complicated systems of motions are transmitted to the grey nuclei or opto-striated bodies of the central regions of the brain. Here these motions de-

termine new motions of which the totality is described in psychophysics by the term "unconscious ideation." But this internal motion, continually tending to become again an initial or external motion, gives rise to unconscious reflex activity. The motion passes by the white nerve-fibres to the cortical periphery of the brain which becomes "the seat of a phenomenon, an excitation, a motion which prolongs or repeats the immediately preceding phenomenon, excitation, or motion, while giving it a shorter and more steady action." The sensations and the reflex-actions derived from them traverse the opto-striated nuclei without retardation and without giving rise to any system of ideas; while consciousness resides in the systemisation or union of the same sensations and reflex-actions. The notion of the ego results from the union or memory of certain ideas, sensations, and actions, which before their union and preservation by the cerebral cortex were unconscious. But before becoming unconscious ideas, those "intellectual virtualities" were in every other part of the organism, and in all the media which surround it, as, "manifestations of energy or of motion, it may be objective phenomena." Thus, says M. de Roberty, if the universe is composed of two parts, the ego and the non-ego, it can be affirmed that they form an uninterrupted circuit. He supposes that when the cosmical energy has produced the phenomena of unconscious mentality in the brain-centres, it is divided into two currents, one of which returns to its source and becomes directly cosmic energy again, and this will be the fate of the other current also when the life of the organism ceases.

This view the author supports by a consideration of the morphological and functional difference supposed to exist between the facts which constitute the notion of the "ego" and the primordial facts of unconsciousness comprised under the generic denomination of the "non-ego." He regards conscious ideas as the telegraphic alphabet, the stenographic writing of the cosmos. Consciousness serves to coördinate the incoherent crowd of events which at each instant invades the normal brain. In these we may see effects of the cause called "universe," and therefore its representatives and substitutes, which they could not be unless there was identity between the two. Thus the "ego" could be defined as the final synthesis of the "symbolic abridgments," of the micrographical abbreviations, of the "non-ego." Thus the ego serves only for the purpose of concentrating or condensing, so to say the non-ego, which it represents in a manner more or less durable and efficient.

This monistic theory gets rid of the unknowable and therefore is a great improvement on that of the materialist or of the idealist. Nevertheless it requires further elaboration. There is no difficulty in understanding that cosmic motion may become transformed within the organism into a feeling. This still, however, leaves unaccounted for the existence of the organism itself. A true monism will, therefore, require that the organism must be in some way identifiable with the cosmos. This is the true problem that has to be solved, and its solution will be greatly aided by the overthrow of agnosticism, against which M. de Roberty has made so vigorous and successful an attack in the present volume. Ω .